

bb

SPECIAL EVENTS

*The Faculty of Music,
University of Toronto
Concert Hall,
Edward Johnson Building*

Berlin Philharmonic Octet

<i>Alfred Malacek - Violin</i>	<i>Rainer Zepperitz - Double Bass</i>
<i>Rudolf Hartmann - Violin and Viola</i>	<i>Herbert Staehr - Clarinet</i>
<i>Kunio Tsuchiya - Viola</i>	<i>Hans Lemke - Bassoon</i>
<i>Heinrich Majowski - Cello</i>	<i>Gerd Seifert - Horn</i>

*Thursday, October 19, 1967
8:30 p.m.*

Program

OCTET (1965) - - - - - Boris Blacher (b. 1903)

Andante

Presto

Andante

Allegro

Blacher, a German of Estonian descent, who "grew up in China and Siberia with English as his first language at school," has lived for most of his adult life in Berlin. He is an active and much-respected teacher of composition. A versatile and prolific composer whose style is difficult to pigeonhole because of its variability from work to work, he is especially remembered by the profession for the intriguing "variable metre" theory he propounded in essays and lectures around the early 1950s and has applied in various recent compositions. A German commentator says he is "above all a master of terse diction, sketch-like musical characterization, and wittily pointed instrumentation. His spare palette reminds one of Diaghilev's remark about music that is so transparent that one could 'see through it with the ear'."

Blacher's new Octet was composed especially for, and dedicated to, the Berlin Philharmonic Octet — as were the other two compositions on this evening's program.

OCTET (Four Fantasies from
"Kammermusik 1958") - - - - - Hans Werner Henze (b. 1926)

Prefazione: Molto lento

Sonata

Cadenza

Epilog: Adagio

Hans Werner Henze studied with Wolfgang Fortner in his native Germany and with René Leibowitz in France. He has made his home in Italy for the past decade or so. Originally associated with extensions of Schoenberg's twelve-tone concepts along lines proposed by his teacher Leibowitz, Henze was first hailed as a white hope of postwar German music and then gradually isolated himself from the Darmstadt and Cologne groupings of more militant avantgardists of his generation, making a separate and independent reputation as a symphonist and opera-writer (*Boulevard Solitude*, *König Hirsch*, *Prinz von Homburg*, *Elegy for Young Lovers*, etc.) of latter-day-romantic tendencies.

"The twelve-tone problem does not play a great part in my music . . . I have always been concerned with musical substance, particularly with melody. In my early pieces . . . the writing was simple and often primitive, but the melodic aspect — and secondly the constant striving to solve the problems of harmony and sound — always dominated. As my scores became more dodecaphonic, sound, melody, and rhythm became more and more dissociated."
—Henze.

"Henze's music represents a conscious attempt to create a free-flowing, serious, popular-practical twelve-tone style — a latter-day chromatic Hindemith, as it were." — Eric Salzman, *Twentieth-Century Music: An Introduction*.

Kammermusik 1958 is a 35-minute chamber cantata based on a cycle of texts by Friedrich Hölderlin. The score is dedicated to Benjamin Britten, and

features, in addition to the instrumental octet, a tenor voice and a solo guitar, two media much favored by Britten himself. It would not in fact be far-fetched to call Henze here a younger-generation Britten — and significantly the older composer has returned to compliment by writing his own Hölderlin settings.

In its full presentation the *Kammermusik* incorporates three “tentos” for solo guitar, three settings for voice and guitar alone, three pieces for voice and ensemble, and four purely instrumental movements. These last have been extracted to form the present concert Octet.

— INTERMISSION —

OCTET (1958) - - - - - Paul Hindemith (1895-1963)

Breit — Mässig schnell

Varianten: Mässig bewegt

Langsam

Sehr lebhaft

Fuge und drei altomodische Tänze (Waltzer, Polka, Galopp)

Hindemith's Octet calls for violin, two violas, cello, double bass, clarinet, bassoon, and horn. The use of a split viola part gives a deliberate centrality to this instrument, whose upper range is scarcely ever handed such a work-out in chamber scores. One recalls Hindemith's own early experiences as a professional violist.

Musically the score has recollections of the extraordinary *Kammermusik* cycle produced by Hindemith in the 1920s — a series of variously- and oddly-scored works in which his personal brand of busy chromatic motion was first strongly noticed. But the Octet has more of the traditional geniality of spirit than those brittle earlier essays. Its allegiances are in fact traditional through and through, despite the unmistakable personal coloring of the music: its basic craft devices, unification by motive and imitative counterpoint, are, to say the least, sanctioned by long use. Hindemith affirms here most impressively not just his mastery of them, but his belief in their continuing viability.

Most characteristic, perhaps, of the five movements are the second and the fifth.

The second, in favorite Hindemith manner, repeats the same melody-line intact and unchanged on six different instruments or groups in succession, while the remainder of the ensemble takes a series of varied counter-ideas. The music is changeable, swift-moving, yet always circles around the same characteristic melodic turns. A coda is added, lightly touched with muted-string flurries and wisps.

The fifth movement is a fully-fledged fugue (a shorter one having already formed the central part of the first movement). The fugue-subject is announced in unison by all eight players, tossed around, contrasted with counterthemes, and brought to a head in a short tutti passage. Then, while the subject is retained, tempos change, giving new shades of meaning and reference within the fugal framework. The “three oldfashioned dances” complement the divertimento-like geniality of the Octet as a whole, their tempos increase excitingly even if their stylistic orientation is vague, and their fugal basis fulfils the textural tendency of the rest of the score in very satisfactory fashion.

Program Notes by John Beckwith